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Statement submitted by Modern Advocacy, Humanitarian, Social and Rehabilitation Association, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

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Statement

The gender mainstreaming approach to enhance effective women's empowerment through poverty eradication and modern education

The five-year review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action asked that over 153 Member States report on their actions to implement the Platform from 12 critical areas of concern. In effect, the review of such national reports indicated that profound changes on the status and role of women have occurred in the years since the start of the United Nations Decade for Women in 1976. More specifically, it acknowledged that women have increasingly and consistently entered the labour force in unprecedented numbers, thus, elevating and propagating their potential and ability to participate in economic decision making at various levels. As such, the women have individually and collectively become major actors in the rise of civil society throughout the world. They have used roles of non-governmental organizations, especially women's organizations, in putting the concerns of women and gender equality on national and international agendas, now being adopted by governments.

However, despite the progress, Member States showed that much work was still needed with regard to the implementation of the Platform for Action in particularly two major areas that have continuously and incessantly hampered major efforts to gender equality worldwide: gender violence and poverty. As well, it is also acknowledged that globalization has introduced other challenges such as trafficking in women and girls, changing nature of armed conflict, growing gap between nations and genders, and the detachment of macroeconomic policy from social protection concerns. In reflection to these challenges, analytical assessments of the national reports on the implementation of the Platform have been critical as there has been no major breakthrough with regard to equal sharing of decision making in political structures at local, national and international levels. In most countries of the world, despite several decades of intensive gender equality and women empowerment measures implemented, the representation of women remains low.

What could have imposed the delay or derailing challenges on such an inclusive Platform?

High Level Policy Gabs with Field Pragmatism. The approach of the Platform for Action embraces the dynamics of equal rights and inherent human dignity of women and men reflected in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as well as, the corresponding derivative international human rights instruments, in particular, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women and the Declaration on the Right to Development. The legal status quo of these documents provide the high level policy force to instruct high level national bodies to adhere to the standards. But are these standards meant only for high level battles? The local community and target beneficiary women remain ignorant of such texts which are only limitedly propagated amongst the governors or leaders who detain and have been maintaining such discriminatory powers in detriment to the status of local women. The local community girls, from childhood, grow in ignorance and cultivate the intrinsic gender inferiority postures such that, at maturity, they find it difficult to automate the acceptance of their newly recognized status in gender equality.

Gender Equity, Poverty and Violence against Women. The Platform for Action makes inclusive reflections for the involvement of women in economic and social development, equal opportunities and the full and equal participation of women and men as agents and beneficiaries of people-centered sustainable development, framed in the context of poverty eradication based on sustained economic growth, social development, environmental protection and social justice. Yet, it fails to distinguish gender roles within the gender equity framework that should guide proper understanding and measure needs and differences between women and men in terms of socioeconomic responsibilities. As well, through its Strategic objectives D.1, D.2, and D.3, the Platform highlights the high level policy need to prevention, study of causes and consequences and, the elimination of violence against women. In the same perspective, the Platform further outlines the contours of discriminatory aspects against the girl child inclusively within negative cultural attitudes and practices, biases in education, health, economic exploitation and awareness and participation in social, economic and political life. As a priority orientation, though the Platform mentions the need to strengthen the role of the family in improving the status of the girl child, it fails to lay the gender equity emphasis upon such family roles which today, because the majority of homes lack such an understanding, violence against women has remained a persistent setback.

Gender Equity, Cultural Relativism and Modern Education. In presenting the full implementation of the human rights of women and of the girl child as an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of all human rights and fundamental freedoms, and not emphasizing the gender equity perspective of such rights, the Platform limits its implication within the cultural relativity context in the scope of cultural women's status. While as cultural women or girls, traditional societal values demand that they play subordinate roles amongst their men, modern education require that such cultural values be adjusted in order to suite the context of equality. The controversial battle between both positions is that they are both, at the same time, deemed correct and necessitate protection. As such, adjusting one's culture to suite a rights based norm which, at the same time, may be violating another norm within the same set of rules and principles, (reflected through articles 3, 12, and 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights) is very confusing to those directly concerned. Also, understood that modern education comes in with consistently improving information technology and communication, the Platform (through strategic objectives F3 and J1) does well in mentioning and addressing the need for increased participation and access to women in all such modern markets. However, the cultural relativist overview within this is silent, thus, a lapse in the gender equity dimension for such Modern Educational standards. Deeply entrenched customary or traditional rules and habits have influenced a degree acceptance by women and girls in respect to the dominant and take-charge position of their men over certain community preoccupations generally regarded and accepted as the duty of the man. Therefore, while global governance is rapidly engendering advanced Information Communication and Technology, such traditional communities lag behind in beliefs that it is a man's only issue. (E/CN.6/2014/NGO/174).

Scoping the review of progress made in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, during the fifty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, and in reflection of the outlined challenges, it is worth acknowledging the following considerations:

- The high level policy gab between governing authorities and the target beneficiaries need to be lessened through obvious pragmatic and responsive measures. Meaning, communication of high level policy texts need effective interpretative and propagation opportunities to their remote beneficiary targets such that, they are truly empowered on the rights contents of the texts for their well-being, as well as knowing right channels for immediate and effective legal recourse and remedies.

- Rudimentary analysis for gender equity dimensions in defining the socioeconomic responsibilities between men and women also needs acute thoughts. Implying, the mentality of the cultural man needs scrutiny adjustment to come to terms with the fact that, his role and responsibility for home provisions over his family is a privileged gender equity consideration which should not in anyway, be taken as a requisite for dominance within the society. As well, the man would be made to understand several other gender equity reasons that apportion other sociocultural responsibilities for the woman, thus, granting the status of equality and mutual support which is not mistaken for the type of favours that demand appreciative returns in subordination.

- Cultural relativism within the modern educational spectrum should henceforth develop perquisites that engage more of traditional men's will and gender equity guides in the gender mainstreaming quest for gender equality.

Precisely, all gender mainstreaming activities to enhance gender equality need rudimentary analysis of the involved gender equity specifics such that all target parties are able to make clear ethical distinctions of their human rights and dignified privileges against those of others.

Though we all share equal rights and freedoms, the framework of gender equity makes gender mainstreaming closest to the attainment of gender equality goals for women empowerment and poverty eradication.